



Lena Garza

ACCIDENTAL DETECTIVE

MAIN STAGE

PJ GRAY



CHAPTER 1

BALCONY SCENE

The old theater was dark and musty. A teen girl stood on the stage. With a flashlight, she swept the darkness in front of her.

“Babe?” she called. “Where are you?”

“Up here!” A teenage boy’s voice pierced the silence. “I’m in the balcony.”

She shined the flashlight at him. “Come down! I don’t want to go up there again. It’s too creepy.”

“My sweet Juliet!” he called. “Wherefore art thou, Juliet? How I long for your tender kiss.”

She tried not to laugh.

“Okay, okay,” the boy said. “Just come up here one more time. I have something to show you.”

Reluctantly, she climbed the old staircase. When she got to the balcony, he was sitting in the same seat as the last time they had met there. He held a flashlight under his chin so it illuminated his face.

They had to meet in private. Her father had caught them together once. Afterward, he said, “If I find you with that farm boy again, you’ll be shipped to an all-girls boarding school. I mean it!”

The boy had different problems. He already had a girlfriend, and his family adored her. She was the daughter of another local farmer. Their parents wanted the two to get married so the families could join businesses.

None of that was important. The girl was in love with the boy. That was the only reason she agreed to meet in the theater. Secret

places were hard to find in their small town. The old Main Street Theater was the perfect place, even if it was a little spooky.

She sat in the seat next to him. “Let’s get out of here. This place isn’t safe.”

“Relax,” he said. “Did you ever hear about the hidden treasure?”

She laughed. “Yeah, but that’s a silly local legend. I thought everyone knew it was made up. Why? Did you happen to find it?”

“No. But I did find something else.” He pointed his flashlight at the back of the seat in front of them. That’s where he had carved their initials into the wood. It read, “R.R. + B.H. FOREVER.” A heart surrounded the etching.

She smiled and grabbed his hand. “That is so sweet.” Her next words were tougher to say. “What about us, though? We can’t keep hiding. You promised to break up with her.”

He frowned. “Even if I did, what about your

dad? He hates me and will tell my parents if he catches us again.”

She tried to think of an argument but knew he was right. They were quiet for a moment. Then she stood up.

“I have to go,” she said softly, walking toward the stairs.

He watched as she made her way to the main floor. She walked down the aisle and climbed onto the stage. The theater’s back door was still open a crack. Before she went out, he called to her.

“Don’t give up on us!” His voice echoed through the theater.

She turned toward him and smiled, though he couldn’t see it in the darkness.

He hopped over the seat where he had carved their initials and leaned against the balcony railing. That’s when he noticed some loose ropes hanging from the ceiling. The boy

grabbed one and stepped onto the railing, balancing with his flashlight in the other hand.

“I am the pirate of your heart, and you are my mermaid queen!” he shouted.

She rolled her eyes and blushed. He always knew how to make her laugh.

“I will find the lost treasure. And when I do, we will run away together!”

“Go home,” she called, shaking her head as she turned and walked out the door.

It was perfectly quiet in the theater. The boy let go of the rope and took a couple of tottering steps along the railing. Standing up there, he felt like a pirate on the bow of a ship. This made him wonder. *Could there really be hidden treasure in this abandoned place? What if I found it and became rich?*

The thought was exciting. He put the flashlight in his mouth. Then he grabbed

another rope with both hands and leaped from the balcony, intending to swing down to the stage.

But the boy never made it. This time, he had not grabbed a rope. It was actually an exposed electrical cable. As he swung, a powerful bolt of electricity shot through him. His lifeless body landed on the rows of seats below.



CHAPTER 2

SPECIAL DELIVERY

Luna Garza stood in front of Apple Glen Middle School. Her classes were over. She waved to a few friends as they got on their buses. Then Mrs. Garza honked her horn from the pickup line. Luna ran to the car and hopped into the front seat.

“Four days left!”

“What do you mean?” her mom asked with a grin.

“You know what I mean. Four more days of school before summer break.” Luna looked into the backseat. “What’s in the big box?”

“It’s for a client. I need to drop it off on the way home. So how was school?”

Luna shrugged. “Fine. Nothing exciting. Who is your client?”

“Do you remember meeting Tim Hebson and his wife, Cammie?”

“Were they at the play we went to last month?”

“Yes. Tim is the director of the Apple Glen Players. That’s the local theater group. He hired me to restore some props for their next play.”

Luna was proud of her mom. Just over a year had passed since the Garza family had moved to Apple Glen, Ohio. It was a faded Midwestern town that had fallen on hard times. But some people, like the Garzas, saw potential in it. Luna’s parents were looking for a new adventure. They bought a big, old two-story house and planned to fix it up

together. Then Luna’s dad got called to Japan for work. While he was there, restoring the house became Mrs. Garza’s passion. Her house projects turned into her own business. Now she was restoring furniture and antiques for other people.

Mrs. Garza drove to the historic downtown area and parked near a storefront. It was the temporary home of the Apple Glen Players. Tim greeted them at the door and helped Luna’s mom carry the big box inside.

“They are ready to go!” Mrs. Garza said proudly as Tim opened the box. Inside were two tall gold candlesticks.

“Wow!” Tim said. “These look brand-new. You did a great job. Thank you.”

“You’re welcome.” Luna’s mom beamed.

Luna asked about the new play. Tim told her how the candlesticks would be used in the production.

“I’ve been dying to ask,” Mrs. Garza said. “What about Mayor Hoover? Have you heard from her yet?”

Tim smiled. “I have a meeting with her today.”

Mrs. Garza clapped her hands. “How wonderful!”

“Would you two care to join me? We’re meeting in a few minutes.”

Luna felt like she had missed something. “Hey! What’s going on?”